

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 028946
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DRAFTED BY IO:TALYNCH
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S/S:MR.REDDY

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TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 028946

NODIS
USUN FOR AMBASSADOR BENNETT ONLY

FOL REPEAT BEIRUT 504 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 4 JAN.

QUOTE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 0504

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, LE
SUBJECT: ASF DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: (A) BEIRUT 0461, (B) BEIRUT 0380, (C) STATE 22035

1. I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS AT HIS
REQUEST AT NOON FEB 4. BOUTROS OPENED CONVERSATION
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 028946

ON SOUTHERN LEBANON BY ASKING IF I HAD RECEIVED ANY
MORE DETAILS ON THE ISRAELI POSITION IN RESPONSE TO
HIS RECENT EXPLANATION TO ME (PARA 2, REF B). I
REPLIED THAT I HAD NOT. BOUTROS THEN REPEATED THE
ARGUMENTS THAT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED TO ME
BY HIM AND PRESIDENT SARKIS ON THE REASONS FOR ASF
DEPLOYMENT SOUTH FROM KFAR HUNI TO KFAR TIBNIT,

INCLUDING STATEMENT THAT PURPOSE WAS TO SECURE ROAD BETWEEN MARJAYUN AND JAZZIN; THAT SOUTHERNMOST POST AT KFAR TIBNIT CONSISTED OF ONLY ABOUT TEN MEN, ONE MACHINE GUN AND ONE TANK; AND THAT ISRAELIS CANNOT POSSIBLY BELIEVE THAT SUCH MOVEMENT ENDANGERS THEM. BOUTROS SAID THAT SUBSTANTIAL WITHDRAWAL WOULD BRING STRONG REACTION AGAINST VILLAGES ALONG THIS AXIS AND THAT AT LEAST SYMBOLIC PRESENCE INVOLVING MINIMUM NUMBER OF SECURITY FORCES WAS ESSENTIAL. IF ISRAEL OBJECTED TO THIS, HE SAID, HE COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT ISRAEL'S REAL PURPOSE IS TO BRING SOUTHERN LEBANON UNDER ITS CONTROL BY CREATING A ZONE OF TURBULENCE AND MILITARY CRISIS.

2. I THEN ASKED IF GOL HAD GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO A FORMULA THAT MIGHT HELP TO SOLVE CURRENT PROBLEM IN NABATIYAH AREA. BOUTROS THEN SUGGESTED, AS A PURELY PERSONAL IDEA AND NOT RPT NOT A FORMAL PROPOSAL FROM THE GOL, THE POSSIBILITY OF WITHDRAWING THE ASF POST AT KFAR TIBNIT TO THE VILLAGE OF JARMAQ, JUST TO THE NORTH. THE AREA BETWEEN JARMAQ AND NABATIYAH WOULD THEN BE PATROLLED BY A SMALL ASF UNIT OPERATING OUT OF JARMAQ, WHICH WOULD NOT BE RIENFORCED, AND THERE WOULD BE NO PERMANENT ASF POST SOUTH OF THAT VILLAGE. MEANWHILE, GOL WOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO FIND A LEBANESE FORCE THAT COULD BE SENT TO NABATIYAH ITSELF. BOUTROS SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE THE USG TO PRESENT THIS IDEA
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 028946

TO THE ISRAELIS AS A USG PROPOSAL. IF THE ISRAELIS AGREE, AND THE IDEA WERE THEN PRESENTED TO HIM AS A USG PROPOSAL TO WHICH THE ISRAELIS HAD AGREED, HE BELIEVED HE COULD OBTAIN THE APPROVAL OF PRESIDENT SARKIS AND THE SYRIANS. BOUTROS EMPHASIZED THAT HE HAD NO AUTHORITY TO MAKE A FORMAL PROPOSAL BUT WAS SIMPLY EXPLORING WITH ME A POSSIBLE FORMULA THAT HE HOPED THE USG AS MEDIATOR WOULD ADOPT AND PROPOSE TO ISRAEL. I PROMISED TO FORWARD HIS IDEA ON THAT BASIS AND INFORM HIM AS SOON AS I HAD A REPLY.

3. ON ISRAELI ASSERTIONS THAT THERE ARE NO CHRISTIAN VILLAGES THAT HAVE TO BE DEFENDED IN THE AREAS TO WHICH ASF HAD RECENTLY DEPLOYED (PARA 2, REF C), BOUTROS SAID THAT THIS IS FALSE. ALTHOUGH KFAR TIBNIT IS MOSTLY WHITES, VILLAGES BETWEEN KFAR HUNI AND AYSHIYA ARE CHRISTIAN, AND ASF HAD IN FACT DEPLOYED THERE AS A RESULT OF STRONG PRESSURE FROM LEBANESE CHRISTIAN LEADERS SUCH AS GEMAYEL,

CHAMOUN AND MARONITE PATRIARCH. AS FOR ISRAELI STATEMENT THAT CHRISTIAN VILLAGES ALONG THE BORDER ARE QUIET AND SUFFER NEITHER FROM MILITARY PRESSURES NOR ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS, BOUTROS SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT GERMANE, SINCE, AS GOL HAD FREQUENTLY POINTED OUT, THE AREA IN WHICH THE ASF HAD DEPLOYED WAS NOWHERE NEAR THE BORDER. HE ADDED THAT AS A LEBANESE HE WAS EMBARRASSED TO BE IN THE POSITION OF DISCUSSING THE RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION AND SECURITY OF LEBANESE VILLAGES WITH THE ISRAELIS.

4. COMMENT: BOUTROS IS OBVIOUSLY TRYING HARD TO FIND A FORMULA THAT WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO US AND THAT HE CAN SELL TO PRESIDENT SARKIS AND THE SYRIANS. AS HE POINTS OUT, THE ISRAELIS ARE DELIBERATELY OVERSIMPLIFYING WHEN THEY THEN THEY ASSERT THAT "IN THE REGION IN WHICH THE SYRIAN FORCES ARE DEPLOYED, SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 028946

THERE ARE AT PRESENT NO CHRISTIAN CONCENTRATIONS OR CHRISTIAN VILLAGES..." THIS IS TRUE ONLY IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF NABATIYAH ITSELF. BOUTROS'S PROPOSAL CONTAINS THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF A WITHDRAWAL BY SYRIAN ASF FORCES AWAY FROM THE LEBANESE-ISRAELI FRONTIER. WE HOPE DEPT WILL AGREE TO HIS SUGGESTION. LANE

UNQUOTE VANCE

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